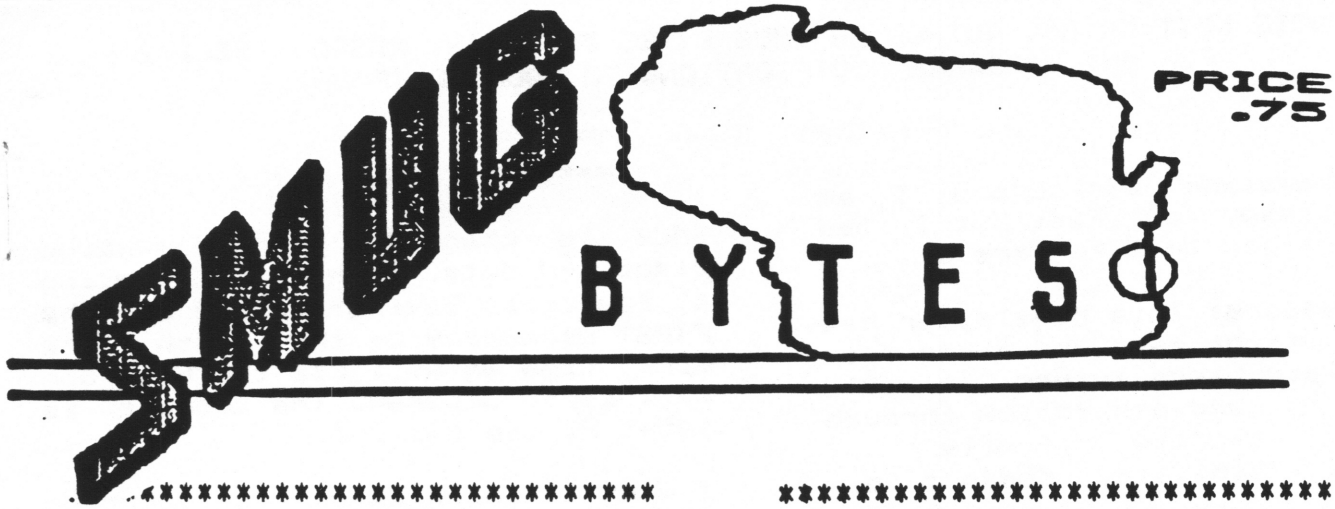

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P.O. Box 101 Butler, WI 53007

THIS MONTH:

- *Bill On Mscript.*
- *Cleveland Computerfest*
- *Rudy's "SQ" NOTES*
- *Presidents Message*
- *And Other Great Things*

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NEXT MEETING DATE: 10/04/88

Send all contributions by the last weekend of the month to:

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FROM THE PRES.

To the Cleveland User Group I am sorry I missed your Fest but I had business I had to take care of.

To all readers: This newsletter has a review of the fest and plans for the Sinclair Users future. It would help you to read and follow through so our favorite family of computers, Sinclair, doesn't die out.

I am sorry to see A+ Computer Resources leave. They will leave a large gap. but I think the family of vendors they leave behind will fill the gap nicely. My hat is off to all of them for stepping in and keeping the QL alive.

===> N O T I C E : <===

SMUG is changing there meeting place and date. We will be meeting at Equitable Savings & Loan on the FIRST Wednesday of the month. The first time we will use the new room will be in October. The address is 14545 W. Capital Dr.

I want to thank Ester for securing the room for us. This will be a big savings for the club. Instead of $40 a month for the hall we pay nothing. We must be sure the room is cleaned up after the meeting and it is a little out of the way for some of you but it will keep the club financially strong.

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"SQ" NOTES

BY R.A.HILSMANN

I do not know how many of you ever seen the manual that comes with the SPECTRUM COMPUTER? It may surprise you, how much more this manual goes into details. Especially about certain Functions which are covered in the TIMEX MANUAL only in appendices. Lets talk about some of the ones not fully covered in the TIMEX MANUAL this month.

DEF FN (defined function) for instance, this is what you get out of the TIMEX manual:
User defined function definition; must be in a program. Each of a and a/1 to a/k is either a single letter or a single letter followed by "$" for string argument or result.
Takes the form DEF FN a()=e if no arguments.

This must be a nightmare to a novice to computer's, even to the average computer user something not easely understood. Well, lets look at what the SPECTRUM MANUAL says about Functions in chapter 9 of the SPECTRUM MANUAL (edited for this column by yours truly).

FUNCTIONS

Consider the sausage machine. You put a lump of meat in at one end, turn the handle, and out comes sausage at the other end. A lump of pork gives pork sausage, a lump of beef gives beef sausage.

Functions are practically indistinguishable from sausage machines but there is a difference: they work on numbers and strings instead of meat. You supply one value (called the argument), mince it up by doing some calculations on it, and eventually get another value, the result.

Different arguments give different results, and if the argument is completely inappropriate the function will stop and give an error report.

Just as you can have different machines make different products - one for sausages, another for dish cloths, and a third for fish sticks and so on, different functions will do different calculations. Each will have its own value to distinguish it from others.

You use a function in expressions by typing its name followed by the argument, and when the expression is evaluated the result of the function will be worked out.

As an example there is a function called LEN, which works out the length of a string. Its argument is the string whose length you want to find, and its result is the length, so that if you type

```
PRINT LEN "SINCLAIR"
```

the computer will write the answer 8, the number of the letters in "Sinclair".

If you mix functions and operations in a single expression, then the functions will be worked out before the operations. Again, however, you can circumvent this rule by using brackets. For instance, here are two expressions which differ only in the brackets, and yet the calculations are performed in an entirely different order in each case (although, as it happens, the results are the same).

```
LEN "Bill"+ LEN "Miller"
4+LEN "Miller"
4+6 = 10
LEN ("Bill"+"Miller")
LEN ("BillMiller")
LEN "BillMiller"
=10
```

Here are some more functions. STR$ converts numbers into strings: its argument is a number, and its result is the string that would appear on the screen if the number were displayed by a PRINT statement. Note how its name ends in a $ sign to show that its result is a string.

For example, you could say

```
LET a$=STR$ 1e2
```

which would have exactly the same effect as typing

```
LET a$="100"
```

or you could say

```
PRINT LEN STR$ 100.0000
```

and get the answer 3, because STR$ 100.0000="100".

VAL is like STR$ in reverse: it converts strings into numbers. For instance,

```
GO TO VAL "300"= GO TO 300
```

In this case the result would be a slowdown in your program execution, since first the argument is evaluated as a string, then the string quotes stripped off this, and whatever is left is evaluated as a number. In a sense, VAL is the reverse of STR$, because if you take a number, apply STR$ to it, and then apply VAL to it, you get back the number you first thought of.

However, if you take a string, apply VAL to it, and then apply STR$ to it, you do not always get back to your original string.

VAL is an extremely powerful function, because the string which is its argument is not restricted to looking like a plain number, it can be a numeric expression. Thus, for instance,

```
VAL "2*3"=6 or even,

VAL ("2"+"*3")=6
```

There are two processes at work here. In the first, the argument of VAL is evaluated as a string: the string expression "2"+"*3" is evaluated to give the string "2*3". Then, the string has its double quotes stripped off, and what is left is evaluated as a number: so 2*3 is evaluated to give the number 6. This can be pretty confusing if you don't keep your wits about you; for instance,

```
PRINT VAL "VAL""VAL""""2""""""""
```

(Remember that inside a string a string quote must be written twice. If you go down into further depths of strings, then you find that quotes need to be quadrupled, or even octupled.)

There is another function, rather simular to VAL, although probably less useful, called VAL$. Its argument is still a string, but its result is also a string. To see how this works, recall how VAL goes in two steps: first its argument is evaluated as a string, then the string quotes stripped off this, and whatever is left is evaluated as a number. With VAL$, the first step is the same, but after the string quotes have been stripped off in the second step, whatever is left is evaluated as another string. Thus

```
VAL$ """Fruit punch""" = "Fruit punch"
```

(Notice how the string quotes proliferate again.) Do

```
LET a$="99"
```

and print out all of the following: VAL a$, VAL "a$", VAL """a$""", VAL$ a$, VAL$ "a$" and VAL$ """a$""".

Some of these will work, and some of them wont; try to explain all the answers. (Keep a cool head.)

SGN is the sign function (sometimes called signum). It is the first function that has nothing to do with strings, because both its argument and its result are numbers. The result is +1 if the argument is positive. 0 if the

argument is zero, and -1 if the argument is negative.

ABS is another function whose argument and result are both numbers. It converts the argument into a positive number (which is the result) by forgetting the sign, so that for instance

ABS -3.2 = ABS 3.2 = 3.2

INT stands for "integer part". An integer is a whole number, possibly negative. This function converts a fractional number into an integer by throwing away the fractional part, so for instance,

INT 3.9 = 3

Be carefull when you are applying it to negative numbers, because it always rounds down: thus, for instance,

INT -3.9 = -4

SQR calculates the square root of a number - the result that, when multiplied by itself, gives the argument. For instance,

SQR 4 = 2 because 2*2=4
SQR 0.25 = 0.5 because .5*.5=0.25
SQR 2 = 1.4142136 (approximately)

because
1.4142136*1.4142136 = 2.0000001

If you multiply any number (even a negative one) by itself, the answer is always positive. This means that negative numbers do not have square roots, so if you apply SQR to a negative argument you get an error report.

You can also define functions of your own. Possible names for these are FN followed by a letter (if the result is a number) or FN followed by a letter followed by $ (if the result is a string). These are much stricter about brackets: the argument must be enclosed in brackets.

You define a function by putting a DEF statement somewhere in the program. For instance, here is the definition of a function FN s whose result is the square of the argument:.

```
DEF FN s(x)=x*x (the square of x)
```

After DEF FN, the s completes the name FN s of the function.

The x in brackets is a name by which you wish to refer to the argument of the function. You can use any single letter you like for this (or if the argument is a string, a single letter followed by $).

After the = sign comes the actual definition of the function. This can be any exression, and it can also refer to the argument using the name you've given it (in this case, x) as though it were an ordinary variable.

When you have entered this line, you can invoke the function just like one of the computer's own functions, by typing its name, FN s, follwed by the argument. Remember that when you have defined a function yourself, the argument must be enclosed in brackets. Try this a few times:

```
PRINT FN s(2)
PRINT FN s(3+4)
PRINT 1+INT FN s(LEN "chicken"/2+3)
```

Ones you have put the corresponding DEF statement in the program, you can use your own functions in expressions just as freely as you can use the computer's.

Note: in some dialects of BASIC you must even enclose the argument of one of the computer's functions in brackets. This is not the case in SINCLAIR BASIC.

INT always rounds down. To round to the nearest integer, add .5 first, you could write your own function to do this.

```
DEF FN r(x)=INT (x+.5)
```

this would result in x rounded to the nearest integer. You will then get, for instance,

```
FN r(2.9)=3        FN r(2.4)=2
FN r(-2.9)=-3      FN r(-2.4)=-2
```

Compare these with answers you get when you use INT instead of FN r. Type in and run the following:

```
10 LET x=0: LET y=0: LET a=10
20 DEF FN p(x,y)=a+x*y
30 DEF FN q()=a+x*y
40 PRINT FN p(2,3),FN q()
```

There are a lot of subtle points to this program. First a function is not restricted to one argument: it can have more, or even none at all, but you must still always keep the brackets.

Second, it doesn't matter whereabouts in the program you put the DEF statement. After the computer has executed line 10, it simply skips over lines 20 and 30 to get to line 40. They do, however, have to be somewhere in the program. They can not be in a direct command.

Third, x and y are both the names of variables in the program as a whole, and the names of arguments for the function FN p.
FN p temporarily forgets about the variables called x and y, but since it has no argument called a, it still remembers the variable a. Thus when FN p(2,3) is being evaluated, a has the value 10 because it is the variable, x has the value 2 because it is the second argument. The result is then, 10+2*3=16 When FN q() is being evaluated, on the other hand, there are no arguments, so a,x and y all still refer to the variables and have values 10,0 and 0 respectively. The answer in this case is 10+0*0=10. Now change line 20 to

```
20 DEF FN p(x,y)=FN q()
```

This time, FN p(2,3) will have the value 10 because FN q will still go back to the variables x and y rather than using the arguments of FN p.

Some BASICs (not the SINCLAIR BASIC) have functions called LEFT$, RIGHT$, MID$ and TL$.

LEFT$ (a$,n) gives the substring of a$ consisting of the first n characters.

RIGHT$ (a$,n) gives the substring of a$ consisting of the characters from n on.

MID$ (a$,n1,n2) gives the substring of a$ consisting of n2 characters starting at n1.

TL$ (a$) gives the substring of a$ consisting of all its characters except the first. You can write some user defined functions to do the same: e.g.

```
10 DEF FN t$(a$)=a$(2 TO)=TL$
20 DEF FN I$(a$,n)=a$(TO n)=LEFT$
```

Check that these work with strings of length 0 or 1.

Note that our FN I$ has two arguments, one a number and the other a string. A function can have up to 26 numeric arguments and at the same time up to 26 string arguments.

Use the function FN s(x)=x*x to test SQR: you should find that

FN s(SQR x)=x if you substitute any positive number for x, and

SQR FN s(x)=ABS x, whether x is positive or negative.

Now doesn't this beat the few lines in the TIMEX MANUAL for an explanation of what it is all about?

Till next month your #3 (RUDY).

****

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Bill on Mscript

OK this time lets cover the right justify, centering print, and flush right. These instructions will give you the ability to print neat columns, if you don't mind a few extra spaces between your words. The centering is a nice way to print column headings. And the flush right is an easy way to have dates, names or what ever you like to print on the right margin. The way to do it is as follows:

>ju=y - Use this to make neat right hand margins. Please note it must start in column 1 to work.

>ju=n - Turns off the right justify.

>ce=y - Turns on the centering feature. This will center the line within a column.

>ce=n - Turns off the centering.

The last one is the flush right.

>fr=y - Flush right sets the printing so the left margin is ragged but the right margin is stright.

>fr=n - Turn off the flush right.

As you see the entries do not have to be capitals. Remember they must start in column 1. The other thing to remember is that this line is not printed nor does it count in the number of lines for overflow to a new page. One other thing to remeber is that EXPANDED PRINT may affect the positioning on the page. So if you are using expanded print you should not include spaces before starting or after ending the expanded line.

Well that's all for now. If you have any questions I will be glad to answer them in this column and or by letter. I hope these columns help. Bill.

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Review Of The Cleveland Computerfest
By Bill Heberlein SE.

Dick Cultice and I left Friday a.m. for the far reaches of that North Coast city of Cleveland Ohio and the Third Annual Midwest Computerfest, only Sinclair spoken there. After a fun 8 hr. drive we arived, got our room and prepared for the next day. The weather was warm and dry the next day and we arived at the show just before 9am and were the first to register. I was impressed with the room the vendors had for there merchandise but a little surprised with the small number of vendors. Though the number was small the amount of merchandise for sale was not. The old standby for the zx81/1000 and TS2068, Zebra Systems was there with their line of software and hardware. They are selling out the Koala Pad so if you want one you'd better hurry. Sharps with all the QL/Z88 hardware and software was demoing the products. A+ was had all the QL products left at the show and said after the show was over they were shipping it back. Time Designs had back issues and other books for sale and "T" shirts. A new, to me repair shop for the TS2068 was represented. They are called Promise Land Electronics. There address is Route 1, Box 117, Cabool, MO 65689 Phone (417) 469-4571, weekends. The other non-user group there was Quanta, not Quantum. This is the hardware/software supplier that also prints QLevels and Syncware News.
The semminars were excellant, wish there were more. They covered many topics. The video tapes should be available through SNUG. The talk, I can't call it a speech because it was too enjoyable, by Nigel Searles was informative, enjoyable and hopeful. By this time, 6:30 pm, everyone took a break for supper but to return at 8 for the SNUG meeting.

The following is my synopsis of that meeting:
SNUG must have 100 members by 1/1/89 to be able to continue. Now a User Group is counted as one member. This means a lot of individual memberships must be found or no SNUG. The cost for a membership has been suggested at $15 for user group and $12 for an individual membership. This would give SNUG a working capital to get going. This would handle the quarterly newsletter SNUG would distrbute to each member. Remember a user group is one member. Also any costs for maillings and other incidentals.

SNUG is the Sinclair Northamerica User Group. If you do not like the name let Mel know and submit one you do like. There are open to ideas. This also applies to any other ideas. The main thing is to get your user group to supply SNUG with a membership blank and the dues. The dues are important as the only money SNUG will get is your dues.

SNUG will give the individul a big joint voice rather than a small individual voice. They also will help to resolve any problems between you and a vendor. How often this occures I don't know but it may have helped with Quantum Computing and their outstanding orders.

The following is a shortend application blank for SNUG:
Enter NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, ST, ZIP and PHONE #. Computer equiptment owned. Would you be interested in a quarterly news letter? In working on or submitting artcles? A list of programs you think others might be interested in. Products you would like to see for the Sinclair computers. Any publications you subscribe to. User groups you belong to. Is it ok to give your name to vendors? Yes or No. Software you would like to see. Mail this list to:

SNUG,
7515 Arbordale Dr.,
Port Richey, FL 34668

In this newsletter is the letter from SNUG explaing the whole idea. Hope you join it's a great idea!

S . N . U . G .
Sinclair Northamerica Users Group

When the first news release was sent out in late March, we weren't sure what would happen. As the June 30 deadline approached, we received approximately 75 cards and letters with an additional 10 phone calls. We were very surprised to hear that we were being discussed in other parts of the world. A letter was sent from Down Under - all the way from Australia. Some of the letters were what we were looking for... opinions as to what people were looking for in an organization of this type. Every single correspondence was in the affirmative - not one had anything to disagree with. The need and desire for an organization such as this is there.

At a meeting of former Winterfest '88 officials the following was decided on:

1. S.N.U.G. would be a reality.
2. The purpose of S.N.U.G. is to act as facilitator between Users Groups and Sinclair users. We want to act as the single source to look to for information about Sinclair and to direct inquiries to the proper sources. Some of the ways to accomplish this purpose is with goals such as the ones listed below. We would have this information on file for distribution.

   a) Sinclair Oriented Users Groups
   b) Current and active list of Vendors
   c) Names and addresses of Sinclair Users (with users permission)
   d) Accurrate and up to date listing of Sinclair specific BBS
   e) Public Domain Software Library (PDSL)
   f) Newsletter and Document Library (NDL)
   g) Establishing a data base if known hardware and software problems with available cures
3. Mel Nathanson would act as Chairperson, Pro-tem.
   Mary-Lynn Johnson would act as Vice-Chairperson, Pro-tem.
   Darrel Stec would act as Treasurer, Pro-tem.
   Will Adams would act as Librarian, Pro-tem.
4. General elections for officers would take place on January 1, 1989.
5. Dues Structure:
   $ 12 Individual Membership
   $ 15 Users Group Membership
6. Membership:
   We are targeting Users Groups and for those not associated with a U.G., they may have membership-at-large status.

Initial membership needed - One Hundred (100) memberships between 9/1/88 and 1/1/89 to help to defray startup costs. To be successful, a minimum membership of Three Hundred (300) needed by 6/1/89.

At this point we want to point out we are not in competition with currently established Users groups. The idea has been and always will be to support these groups and not detract from them. They are the backbone of the community. We are here to help them and in turn help themseleves. Without them we would have a very difficult road indeed. They are our best friends and we wish to return the favor. This does not preclude the individual user, isolated without ready access to a Users group. Though we hope to put him/her with all Users groups or point him/her to local users nearby. Who knows? Maybe a new Users group could form.

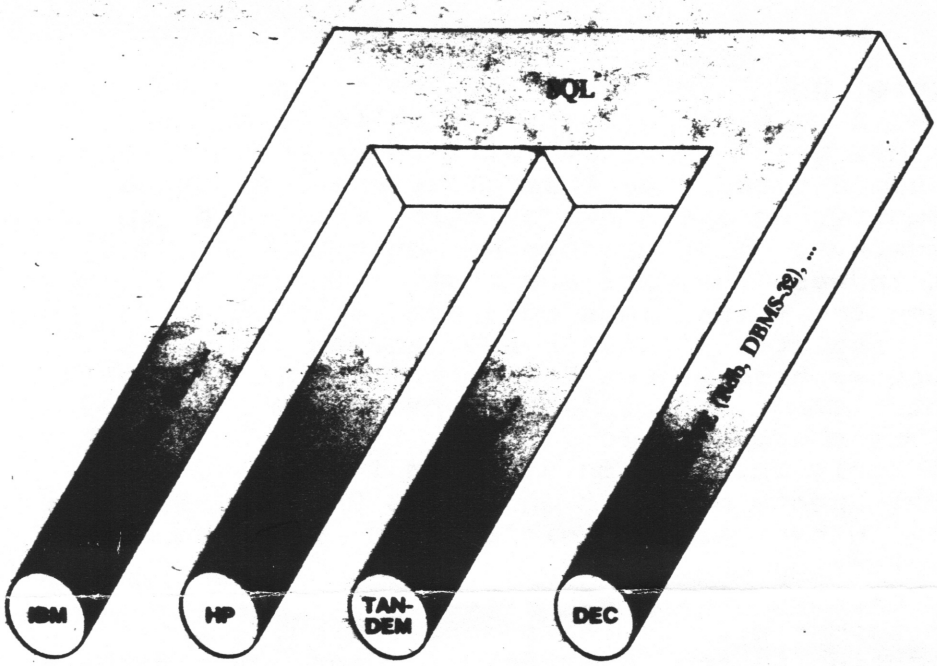
7. A Quarterly publication starting in January, 1989 with an annual update of users and Users Groups (Sinclair Annual 1989). Other issues could contain specific info on the organization and possibly a index of published Sinclair related articles during that quarter. Any other submissions will be considered for publication.
8. Publication in the Quarterly Journal of a Calendar of events updated every three months to prevent possible overlap and conflicts of area events.
9. Organization of special interest subgroups (SIGS) such as a Beginners group, Individual Disc Operated Systems groups, Pro-file and Mscript software groups for example.
10. Establishing a follow-up procedure for complaints to vendors.

Long term goals include a forum of interested parties to lead to standardization of hardware and software; making contact with and utilization of software bases in England and other parts of the globe; investigation of release into the public domain of information being held by authorized patent holders of Sinclair Technology; contact former software houses and cottage industries to release their rights and interests in programs no longer on the current market.

To prevent the idea that S.N.U.G. is "VAPORWARE - here in word only", the first order is to get the PDSL up and running. We have offers from some users groups and prominent individuals to donate their libraries. It is our goal to have every published program listing made available to members. We anticipate in six months to have the largest base of Sinclair specific software on the continent.

What does this all mean? This idea will not fly without your participation. If you do nothing to prolong the life of your computer now, then eventually there will be no support. The organizers want to make clear that if there are not 100 paid memberships by 1/1/89 there will be no organization.

Anything less is simply not feasable. All monies will be put into an escrow account and if the goal is not met, membership dues will be returned. If the minumum membership quota is met, then all the above ideas can become reality.



THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE